

PART II

APPLYING RECORDS RETENTION STANDARDS

1. Records Retention Standards. Records retention standards prescribed for naval records are contained in parts III, IV and V of this instruction. The authorities they contain are applicable to the records they describe and are accumulated by Navy and Marine Corps activities ashore and afloat throughout the naval establishment and to individual USN and USNS ships. Limitations on the use of individual standards are indicated in the description of the records. The records retention standards are the basis for the establishment of activities' records disposal programs. They prescribe how long records are to be kept, whether short-term or long-term, and provide authority for:

a. The Preservation of Records Described in Parts III, IV and V of this Instruction as Permanent. Identify and mark these records for preservation and transfer to the appropriate Federal Records Center (FRC). Eventually the records will be offered to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

b. The Periodic Destruction of Temporarily Valuable Records. Retention periods for these records are expressed either in terms of time or the occurrence of a particular event or action. Temporary records are to be held by the naval activity or an FRC for the prescribed retention period and then destroyed.

c. Appraising Records to Determine Retention Standards. Liaison for appraisal of records to determine retention standards is CNO (N09B35) for Navy records and CMC (ARAE) for Marine Corps records. In appraising records to determine their current retention standards, first determine which records have research, legal, historical, or scientific values that are worthy of preservation. The remaining records then are temporary records. Appraise these to determine how long they will be needed in the conduct of the DON's business before they can be destroyed. Naval/Marine Corps records appraised as "permanent" are few in volume, but these records are vital. They protect Navy and Marine Corps interests and document significant experiences. While there are some exceptions, most "permanent" records are at the departmental or fleet command level, i.e., departmental offices, systems commands, flag commands of the operating forces, and research activities. This is logical since these activities formulate and prescribe policies and procedures to be carried out by other organizations. Included among records designated for permanent retention are the primary program files of

unique-type activities that may be valuable for historical or research purposes. Also included are primary program records of one of several similar activities retained as a sample of the functions performed. Permanent files are designated in this instruction under the SSIC subject heading pertaining to the activity or organization's primary function or mission.

d. Local Historical Records. Records briefly summarizing the history of an activity sometimes may have continuing value to the local activity, but may not have permanent value to the DON as a whole. Whether or not an activity's program file is designated specifically as permanent in parts III, IV and V of this instruction, these few historical documents may be appropriate for long term retention on site by the individual activity provided the commanding officer approves. Furthermore, if such records are designated as permanent in parts III, IV and V of this instruction and are over 30 years old, they must be transferred to NARA.

e. Establishing Retention Standards. Standards are developed based on: (1) recommendations of headquarters activities that sponsor the SSIC under which the records or files are identified; and (2) general government-wide standards pertinent to Naval/Marine Corps records. They may also be initiated by CNO (N09B35) or CMC (ARAE) who then obtain the comments and/or concurrences of cognizant activities and other commands concerned. The concurrence of other government agencies is obtained where appropriate or required. CNO (N09B35) submits proposed retention standards to the Archivist of the United States for final approval. The approved retention standards are then issued by the Secretary of the Navy in parts III, IV and V of this instruction.

f. How Standards are Coded. Records retention standards are numbered according to SECNAVINST 5210.11D (the Department of the Navy File Maintenance Procedures and SSIC). They are divided into 13 chapters and arranged under the same 13 major subject headings provided by the SSIC Manual. Each chapter is segmented within 13 major classification series to primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, as needed. The appropriate retention authority for records will be found under the same subject classification number used for filing documents and for numbering instructions, notices, messages, reports, and forms. This interlinking of file maintenance and disposal codes makes it easier to locate and properly apply the applicable retention standards. All disposal authorities for military personnel records, for example, are coded under the 1000-1999 series of the

SSIC Manual. Disposal guidance for these records is found under the 1000-1999 series in chapter 1, part III, of this instruction. All disposal guidance for administrative records is found under the 5000 series in chapter 5, part III, of this instruction. For a more specific example: SECNAVINST 5214.2B (NOTAL) is the directive that requires activities to establish a Reports Management Program and prepare Reports Analysis Data Forms (OPNAV 5214/10) Report Control Symbol (OPNAV 5214-1). The SSIC for "reports management" is 5214. Any correspondence created in this area would carry the 5214 SSIC. Disposal authority for "Reports Management" is found in paragraph 5214, chapter 5, part III, of this instruction. For easy reference, all SSIC's with disposal authority are listed in appendix I of this manual.

g. How Records are Described. In most instances, records are described in general terms. This general grouping allows for minor differences in terminology or for the local character of the records. It also makes disposal instructions fit most naval activity records.

h. How Standards are Used. Many retention standards are broad and local file series will not exactly match the general retention standards specified in parts III, IV and V of this instruction; i.e., records need not always be identical to those described in the general retention standards prescribed in this instruction, but the records must:

- (1) be similar in nature;
- (2) document the same or essentially the same information; or
- (3) perform the same or similar purpose.

Moreover, the retention periods contained in parts III, IV and V of this instruction will not be exceeded. They should not be stretched to cover other significant records. While most standards for naval records are broad, some are narrower in scope and more specific. Be careful not to apply the broader standards to several individual records when separate and more specific standards are prescribed. Supporting documents and other closely related papers may be disposed of on the basis of disposal authority selected for the basic documents when specific disposition authorities are not provided.

2. Deviations from Retention Standards. If unforeseen circumstances make it necessary to retain records longer than prescribed in this instruction, advise CNO (N09B35), or CMC (ARAE) for Marine Corps activities,

via the administrative chain of command, giving the reasons and requesting an extension of the retention period. If it appears the extension should be applied Navy/Marine Corps-wide, recommend a change in retention standards for those particular records. It is unlawful to dispose of records before expiration of the retention period.

3. Exceptions to Standards when Litigation, Investigations, and Exceptions are Pending. Regardless of the retention standards established by this instruction, records pertaining to: (a) unsettled claims for or against the Government; (b) current or pending litigation; (c) incomplete investigations; or (d) exceptions taken by the General Accounting Office or internal auditors will not be destroyed, but retained, until the litigation is settled, the investigation is completed, or the exception is cleared. Segregate and retain records directly pertinent to the litigation, investigation, or exception until all actions are completed. The remainder of the file may be disposed of as scheduled.

4. Establishing New or Revised Standards. All groups of naval records should be covered by the retention standards in this instruction; however, any records not covered cannot be destroyed and must be treated as "unscheduled records." If a category of records is found for which a retention standard is not provided, or if a change to a present standard is needed, recommend the new or revised retention standard to CNO (N09B35), or to CMC (ARAE) for Marine Corps activities, via the administrative chain of command. Recommendations should not be submitted for nonrecord material; this material is disposable at the discretion of the commanding officer after its nonrecord status has been determined. (See appendix F, paragraph 69, for definition of non record material.) As a rule, recommendations for slight reductions in retention standards, such as from 1 year to 6 months, should not be made. The benefits do not justify the paperwork. Retention periods of less than 1 year should be recommended only for bulky, rapidly accumulating file series. When recommendations for retention periods of less than a year are made, they should be fully justified. Include the file volume, annual growth rate and assurance that the short period is realistic and actually will be applied.

a. Submission of Disposal Standards.

Recommendations for new or revised standards should be submitted on a Standard Form 115 and contain the following information:

- (1) The name of the activity, types of activities or

other organizational units accumulating the records.

(2) A brief description of the records series. This should include information regarding the use and purpose of the records, any requiring instructions, and type of records, i.e., reports, correspondence, charts, magnetic tapes, computer listings, punched cards, etc.; SECNAVINST 5212.5D.

(3) A retention paragraph stating how long the records should be kept. (For example: Destroy when 2 years old.)

(4) A standard transfer period:

(a) When the proposed retention period is more than 1 year, include an FRC transfer date after the records have served their reference value.

(b) When the proposed retention period is permanent, include a transfer date to an FRC and an offer date when the records can be transferred to NARA legal custody. Normally NARA accessions permanent records when 20-25 years old. However, permanent machine readable records should be transferred as soon as possible.

(c) When the proposed retention period is 1 year or less, transfer to an FRC is not necessary. Records should undergo periodic file breaks and be retired to local, in-house storage areas.

(5) Justification for proposed retention period. This is particularly important when the records are recommended for permanent retention or if it appears those recommended for early destruction may have continuing or permanent administrative, legal, research, or historical value. Indicate local administrative needs for the records as well as known requirements of others. List the uses made of the records, by whom, and how often. Where relevant, cite any governing statute or regulation (i.e., Office of Personnel Management or Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulation or Comptroller General decision).

(6) Known duplication, including the location of other copies and the existence of related records or information and their use.

(7) A representative sample when establishment of a new retention period for temporary records is recommended. Any samples of forms must be filled in.

(8) Volume and inclusive time periods of

nonrecurring, discontinued records.

(9) Annual cubic foot accumulation and accumulation to date for records recommended for permanent retention. If machine readable records, give the number of reels.

(10) Description and retention period for each medium used to create records (i.e., paper, microfilm, computer tape, etc.).

5. Responsibility for Applying Standards. Each Navy activity will program its records, regardless of media, for orderly retention and disposal following the standards and procedures prescribed in this instruction. Effective programming requires:

a. Designation of specific or general authority for administering and applying records disposal standards within the activity. The overall centralized control of each activity's disposal program is desirable even though file maintenance may be decentralized. In a large activity, however, responsibility may be delegated to specific organizational units of the activity provided an individual within that organizational unit is made responsible for file maintenance and disposal.

b. Determination of the disposal instructions applied to each record series the activity accumulates, based on the standards contained in parts III, IV and V of this instruction and on a local records inventory.

c. Local posting of disposal control instructions by placing pertinent disposal instructions on file folders, disk folder, reel canister, file drawers, or cabinets, as appropriate (see paragraph 6, step 4). Publication of local schedules or records listings is not required or necessary.

d. An annual inspection and review of local disposal procedures and of the activity's records to ensure that:

(1) records disposal and retention procedures are current, adequate, understood, and applied regularly and effectively; and

(2) proper retention standards have been applied to all records accumulated.

6. Applying Standards Initially. The following steps are recommended for initially establishing disposal programs or applying this instruction:

a. **Step 1.** Inventory all records, including machine readable, accumulated by each organizational unit to be covered. From this inventory you will be able to prepare a concise description of each series; determine file arrangement, use, volume, and location; and match each record series with the appropriate retention standard in this instruction.

b. **Step 2.** Analyze inventory data and records series to determine:

- (1) the proper retention standard applicable to each;
- (2) material is properly categorized as nonrecord (see appendix F, item 69) and designated for destruction when its purpose has been served; and
- (3) any records that are not covered by the retention standards.

Use the index to this instruction for this appraisal process, but also consider carefully the purpose and function of each record series and the scope of the disposal authority contained in this instruction. Give special attention to general correspondence files; they frequently consist of more than one record series. Each SSIC in the general correspondence files should be reviewed to determine any SSICs that may comprise distinct record series. Housekeeping and administrative operations records, for example, should be identified, retired, and destroyed as a separate series; they should not be treated the same as more important policy and program files.

c. **Step 3.** Establish specific cutoff and retirement periods for each record series. Offers of permanent records to NARA on a SF 258 will be made via the administrative chain of command to CNO (N09B35).

d. **Step 4.** Prepare disposal control guidance for each record series (based on information gathered in previous steps) and post on file cabinets, drawers, guides, or folders, as appropriate. Include the following information in abbreviated form:

- (1) SSIC and title;
- (2) specific cutoff dates, and, if applicable, transfer dates;
- (3) retention period or disposal date; and

(4) paragraph number from parts III, IV and V containing authority for the retention period being applied.

Accomplishment of this step notifies file personnel and others of disposal actions to be applied to each records series. It eliminates the need for preparation and issuance of local records disposal schedules or instructions containing detailed disposal information for individual record series.

e. **Step 5.** Take action immediately to apply disposal instructions to eligible records.

(1) Destroy records which have expired retention periods. Consult the local representative of the NARA volume to be destroyed is sufficient to justify recycling.

(2) Retire inactive records to be destroyed locally to local storage area. Include short-term temporary records eligible for destruction in the near future.

(3) Transfer long-term records not eligible for destruction in the near future to the appropriate FRC if authorized to do so in parts III, IV and V of this instruction.

f. **Step 6.** Appraise any records that are not covered by authorized disposal instructions. Develop a disposition schedule and submit it through the administrative chain of command to CNO (N09B35), or to the CMC (ARAE) for Marine Corps activities on an SF 115. Procedures for submitting proposed changes to record retention standards are contained in paragraph 4, part II.

g. **Step 7. Schedule Disposal Actions.** Once you establish a local records disposal program, plan for future records disposal on a regular, periodic basis—preferably annually at the end of the calendar year. Within 1 month from the file break date, destroy, retain, or transfer all eligible files (less Fiscal Year files). Records can be eligible for destruction every day; however, it is not practical to destroy or transfer records too frequently or in very small quantities. Maintain fiscal files on a fiscal year basis and dispose of at the end of the fiscal rather than the calendar year. They may also be held for an additional 3 months and disposed of with other eligible records at the end of the calendar year.

h. **Step 8. Keep Local Guidance Current.** Determine retention standards for new files as soon as they are established. Create new file labels and revise local records disposal guidance promptly as changes occur.

i. **Step 9.** Make annual reviews of disposal procedures. Take follow-up action as necessary.

j. **Step 10.** Keep Statistics on Volume of Records Held. Maintenance of statistics on volume (cubic feet) of records held in both office space and local storage areas serves as a check on the effectiveness of the local records disposal programs. Whenever there is an increase in the volume of a records series on board, immediately determine the reason for the increase. If the increase is due to non-compliance with disposal instructions, take remedial action.